



**WILD ROSE** (*Rosa* .. various species)

**FLOWERS:** May - July

**DESCRIPTION:** 5 showy petals, leaves toothed, leaves on old stems are 3 divided and new shoots have some 5 divided leaves.  
Rose Family.

**HABITAT:** Open woods, glades, prairies, thickets, clearings, railroads, roadsides

123

**LOCATION:** Statewide except southeastern lowlands

**COLLECTION:** May - July, petals; Fall - Spring, hips

**USES:** Salad, confection, jelly, tea, jam, soup, dried fruit

This wilding is a gold mine of vitamin C. It has been tested by food analysts to have 60 times as much vitamin C as a lemon and 3 rose hips have as much as a whole orange. There are several varieties of these wild species around Missouri to offer aesthetic beauty as well as healthful nibbles.

The petals make a good nibble in the field while foraging or hiking. I've collected the petals and used them in a tossed salad with leaf lettuce. The delicate pink gave both color and taste appeal to the salad. The petals may also be used as a dainty decoration on a luncheon plate with violet leaves or the leaves of lamb's quarters under the rose petals and a scoop of chicken, shrimp, tuna

or crab salad on top. An equally artistic flair is obtained with a gelatin salad. Try it! Your luncheon will be assured of a conversation topic!

Candied petals are beautiful decorations. Gather the petals when dry and collect 2 cups. In a saucepan melt  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups sugar in  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup hot water, add 1 T corn syrup. Bring to a boil and cook until a candy thermometer reads 230 degrees. Remove from heat and chill immediately in a pan of ice or in the refrigerator until syrup begins to crystallize. Dip rose petals in syrup, spread coated petals on some waxed paper. Before the petals dry, sprinkle both sides with powdered sugar. After the petals are completely dry, they may be stored in Tupperware and kept for as long as two months.

124 A worthy jelly is made by collecting the petals, allowing them to steep in boiling water overnight; strain off the liquid and continue as any jelly. My standard is one cup sugar per cup liquid, and for every four cups of liquid, add one package of Sure-Jell.

A passable tea is made from the dried petals as well as from the dried young leaves and the rose hips. This tea should be steeped for several minutes, using a teaspoon per cup or mixing with mint leaves or lemon peel. This herb tea is reputed to aid in dissolving gallstones.

The rose hips, or seed pods, are gathered from the time they turn red in the fall until late winter. To process the hip, remove the stems and beards (or hairs of the flower), then cover with water to cook slowly for 20 minutes or so. Some sources suggest cooking the seeds separately in water and straining, using this liquid in place of water called for in syrup, jelly or jam recipes. The jelly is golden and delicious. The hip seems to be more useful for jam after the first frost.

Rose hips may be used in making jellies, jams, rose hip butter and syrup, or dried and baked in cakes, cookies or breads. A healthful soup is made by cooking mashed rose hips for 10 minutes. To this strained mixture a paste of corn starch or wheat flour and water is added, thickening the soup. The soup may then be eaten, hot or cold.

Dried rose hips are used in soups, hot or cold drinks, sprinkled over cereals, or eaten raw as you would a raisin. I personally do not find the dried hip very tasty, but I'll eat a few knowing the high vitamin count!

One plant can provide all of this and be beautiful, too! A rose by any other name .....!!!



**REDBUD** (*Cercis canadensis*)

**FLOWERS:** March - May

**DESCRIPTION:** Heart-shaped leaves, early blooming pink buds clustered around twig.

**HABITAT:** Open woodland, border of woods, rocky streams and bluffs

**LOCATION:** Statewide

**USES:** Salad, vegetable, pickle

125

The redbud and dogwood combine to be nature's beautiful announcers of spring. The pinkish flowers can be seen scattered through the edges of timber on any spring drive.

The flowers are not only tasty but also very pretty when used in a tossed salad of violets, tulip petals and young plantain and violet leaves. A thin dressing of oil and vinegar may be used, or the green leaves omitted and a thin dressing of any fruit juice, mayonnaise and sugar gives a just-right touch to the flower petals.

The buds make an interesting relish or pickle mixture using the following recipe: in each quart jar add 1 clove garlic, 1 stalk celery, 1 hot green pepper and 1 head of dill or 1 T dill seed, along with the washed redbuds. In a saucepan combine 1 pint water, 1 cup cider vinegar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup salt, and cook for 5 minutes. Pour liquid over the redbuds in the jar to within  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of top and seal. Try this in salads or slaw next time.

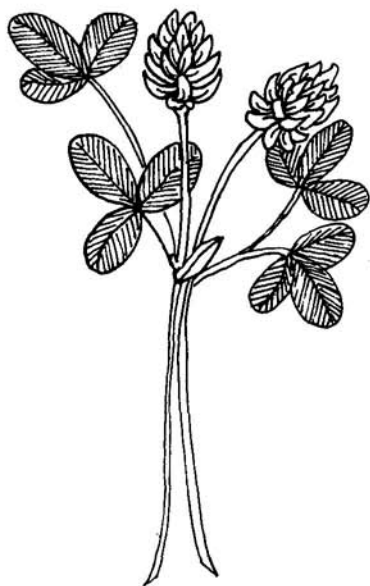
The flowers and buds are a welcome addition to a pancake batter or as a fritter. The slightly nutty flavor of the buds is appealing to my tastes and, therefore, is an asset in quick breads. Simply use your favorite pancake mix or recipe. Prepare as

directed and pour a spoonful of batter in a hot skillet. Scatter a few buds on the top of each pancake. These are a real treat, especially if topped with blackberry syrup. Take your own biscuit or muffin recipe and add a handful of redbud flowers into the batter. A tasty fritter is made by preparing a batter of 1 cup flour, 1 t baking powder,  $\frac{1}{2}$  t salt, 1 cup milk, 1 egg, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup corn oil. Spoon in as many redbuds as desired and cook as a pancake. The fritter is even better, when fried and drained of excess oil, if lemon or orange juice is squeezed over the fritter and it is rolled in powdered sugar.

The flowers, as well as the pods, which form later, may be fried in butter as a vegetable. The pods may be boiled before buttering or frying, or they may be pickled in the same recipe used for the flowers as well as the dill crock recipe on page 7.

I'm certainly not advocating doing away with this lovely spring colorama; however, if you have two or three of these trees in your yard as I do, try it for a change in your menu.





**CLOVER** (*Trifolium pratense*  
— **Red Clover**)  
(*Trifolium repens* —  
**White Dutch Clover**)

**FLOWERS:** May -  
September: red, white,  
yellow

**DESCRIPTION:** Foliage is  
the familiar three  
leaflets which occa-  
sionally contains a  
fourth. Pea Family.

**HABITAT:** Fields, meadows, 127  
waste and cultivated  
ground, roadsides, rail-  
roads, lawns

**LOCATION:** Statewide

**COLLECTION:** March - June,  
leaves; Summer,  
blossoms

**USES:** Salad, tea, potherb,  
breadstuff

Clover once reminded me of bare feet, summertime and bees. Now it brings to mind a wild salad, a cup of hot tea and a biscuit! It's funny how an image is formed and changes only as new interest or new knowledge provides the change.

I've just steeped a cup of red clover tea which I picked last summer and dried. I picked the red flowers while they were in full bloom but before they started turning brown. The flower heads dried on my kitchen counter in a cookie sheet for several months. It makes a light yellow tea that is quite good. To make the tea, add 1 t of the dried, crushed flowerheads to 1 cup of boiling water and steep or let set for 3 - 5 minutes. The white clover heads may be substituted here.

In early spring I usually make a wild salad using as many wildings as I can locate. Of course, I add some clover leaves. Ben Harris, who wrote *Eat the Weeds*, tells a tale of an old custom of the Chinese people. When they saw the first green clover in the spring, they would declare a clover feast. The people would eat large quantities and gather the greens by the baskets. Because the greens were eaten quickly and in huge amounts, it was not uncommon for the people to bloat like horses or cattle who over-eat clover in the spring. Therefore, the lesson learned is not to eat a basketful! However, the idea of the Chinese was to cleanse the intestines and body system.

A good way to use the clover as a potherb is to pick three cups of leaves and blossoms. Melt 3 T oleo in a skillet and add the clover along with 3 T water. Cook covered for several minutes, salt and eat. This recipe is enough for one person or a sampling for two.

Biscuits made by substituting dried red or white clover blossoms for part of the flour are delicious. I use the following recipe: 1¾ cup flour, ¼ cup crushed and dried red clover blossoms, 3 t baking powder, ½ t salt, 4 T shortening, ¾ cup milk. Cut the shortening into the dry ingredients and add milk, mixing well. Roll out and cut with a biscuit cutter or a glass turned upside down. Bake in a 450-degree oven for 12 or 15 minutes. This makes it worth the collecting, drying and crushing!!

Jethro Kloss, in his book *Back to Eden*, says: "Red clover is one of God's blessings to man ... it is excellent for cancer of the stomach, whooping cough and various spasms. The warm tea is very soothing to the nerves."

Soothing to the nerves, you say? How about gathering me some more blossoms!!!!



**GROUNDNUT** (*Apios americana*)

FLOWERS: June - September

DESCRIPTION: A twining vine with hairy stems and leaves. Leaves alternate with 5 - 9 leaflets. Flower clusters are dense, chocolate-brown and fragrant.

HABITAT: Wet meadows, low thickets, along streams or ponds

LOCATION: Scattered statewide

COLLECTION: September - March

USES: Potato substitute, bean

129

This plant produces a string of tubers not three inches underground. It takes two or three years for the tuber to grow to a usable size.

Some interesting things occur with this plant. While it can be eaten raw, it is tough and contains a sticky juice that adheres to teeth and lips. Roasting or boiling in water and then roasting alleviates the adhesive quality. Another way to prepare the underground vegetable is to slice and fry it in oil as you would a potato. Eat immediately because the fibers reconstruct and toughen as it cools.

Indians used the seeds as a vegetable similar to beans, both green beans and shellies.

## TRAILING WILD BEAN

(*Strophostyles helvola*)

FLOWERS: June - October

DESCRIPTION: Twining plant with 3 bluntly-lobed leaflets. Flower stalk produces pink flowers and has fruit at the same time. Pea Family.

HABITAT: Moist ground, sand or gravel bars, disturbed areas, rich rocky woods, thickets

LOCATION: Scattered

COLLECTION: July - October

USES: Vegetable, salad



130

On one of my foraging trips I ran across the pods of the trailing wild bean. I was as excited as if I had uncovered a hidden treasure, for it was a treasure of sorts to be able to experiment with this bean's edibility.

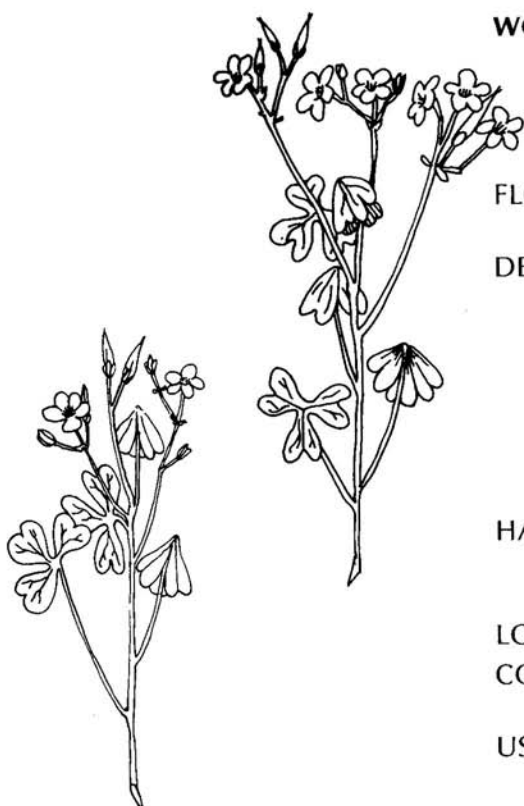
The longest bean was about 3 inches long with most being smaller than my little finger in length and as big around as a 16 penny nail or less. The pink flowers and bean pods are both active on the plant during the same period.

I collected as many as possible which gave me a small handful with which to experiment. I cooked the beans with a small amount of wild onion, salt and bacon dripping in water, just as I have domestic green beans. This proved to be somewhat tasteless with the larger ones being stringy.

The smallest pods, when used sparingly in a raw tossed salad, added an interesting texture and flavor.

The beans may be frozen after blanching, although it does not improve the tastelessness of the bean. It would certainly be a survival dish and is still a conversational item at the meal, but it receives a low rating in the wild edible rating board of the Phillips family!





**WOOD SORREL** (*Oxalis violacea* — **Violet Wood Sorrel**) (*Oxalis stricta* — **Yellow Wood Sorrel**)

FLOWERS: April - November; yellow and violet

DESCRIPTION: Low growing with shamrock-like foliage. The violet flowering variety also has purple colorations on the leaves and stems. Wood Sorrel Family.

HABITAT: Fields, rocky and open woods, roadsides, gardens

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: March - November

USES: Nibble, salad, tea, wafer, soup

131

---

**CAUTION:** The quantity of oxalic acid in this plant makes it unwise to eat in large amounts. Some individuals are sensitive to small amounts.

---

This tart plant has three clover-like leaves, each with a fold in the center which forms heart-shaped leaflets.

The plant is readily eaten by all boys and girls familiar with the taste. Since it contains a great deal of oxalic acid, it is unwise to eat large quantities of this "sourgrass." It is a delicious nibble on hikes and an asset to a green salad.

The green leaves make a tea as well as a tasty hot or cold soup. To make a tea, steep the green leaves in hot water until the desired strength is acquired. In making the soup, boil the sorrel for a few minutes, drain off water and combine a generous cup of sorrel, four cups of milk, two teaspoons of grated onion, two tablespoons of flour and two teaspoons of butter. Allow the milk to get hot but not come to a boil. Serve immediately or set aside and refrigerate it for a cold soup meal.

Another idea for you campers and scout leaders is to make a sorrel wafer to be used with a wild woodland tea. Dip the leaf in stiff egg white mixture, roll in sugar and allow the wafer to dry on waxed paper or a rack.

I take a lot of groups into the woods on hikes or into the wilderness with packs. With all groups, I have felt free to introduce them to this sour field find. However, on one all-day outing with kindergarteners, I picked enough wood sorrel for each person to have one leaf with stem or one flower with stem. Within an hour, our kindergarten teacher had a swollen upper lip. The lip was feverish and pulsated with a smarting sensation for about 24 hours before returning to normal size.

This was with a single leaf! As with all cautionary plants, some individuals can be super-sensitive.

This plant makes a good fish sauce, much as a tartar sauce. Use mayonnaise as your base, add grated onions and wood sorrel which has been doused in hot water for several seconds and chopped. It may also be chopped and added raw — which is my favorite.

A delicious, as well as attractive, way to serve sorrel is to place several leaflets on a plate as a base, top with cottage cheese, and sprinkle a few open leaflets on top.

In *Eat the Weeds*, Ben Harris credits sorrel as an aid to heart problems. The heart is indirectly helped as a result of the direct benefit to kidney and blood disorders. Personally, I thoroughly enjoy sorrel for its individual, distinctive, sour taste. Any medicinal help is strictly a bonus!



**HOLLYHOCK** (*Althaea rosea*)

FLOWERS: May - September: white, pink, red

DESCRIPTION: Tall, thick-stalked plant with large leaves, coarse and heavily veined. Mallow Family.

HABITAT: Rich rocky areas, waste areas, gardens, roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Scattered

COLLECTION: April - August 133

USES: Salad, soup

The hollyhock is a garden escapee becoming wild along roadsides, railroads or in rich waste fields.

As a child I loved to make hollyhock dolls. With a toothpick, punch a fully opened hollyhock in the center of the flower and slide it midway down the toothpick. This resembles a full-skirted gown. The bud on the tip of the toothpick made the face and hair-do, completing the flower doll to be used in a moss-carpeted doll house.

The early leaves of this plant may be used raw in a tossed salad or cooked in soups. It produces a rather thick sap when eaten raw but is not terribly disagreeable in taste. It is not, however, a plant I would go out of my way to find while searching for salad materials.

The wild cousin of the hollyhock, the rose mallow, is a friend I've located on the bank of a pond I haunt. It's edible, but it's not tasty.